

The unique and unspoiled charm of St Marys is, like for many other residents, what attracted us to the area. As new full time members of the community we have invested our assets in a home and additional land at Lands End, and have also owned a rental property in the downtown area for the last eight years. In talking with other residents about the drawing power of the St Marys area the common thread seems to be the small town charm, ease of living and the natural beauty of this area. Attending the introductory meetings and follow up City Planning meetings about the future use of the Gillman Mill site we have come to understand more about the needs and desires of St Marys. We recognize the City's need to provide jobs and to create a broader tax base, but we also feel that the long term needs and development of the St Marys area should be taken into consideration. Where do we want to be in 10, 20 or 30 years from now? The city needs to continue to attract outside investments from new residents but this will not be possible if unlimited, unbridled development on the Gillman site eliminates the quiet charm of the downtown area. Significant changes in truck, rail, or commercial water traffic would have a negative impact on the quality of living in this community.

We are realistic and fully aware that St Marys needs more job opportunities and for the mill site to be a positive attribute to the city, but many wish, as do we, that this be done in a way that protects the best elements of what St Marys has to offer. Because of the close proximity of the mill site to the historic downtown, waterfront, and the infrastructure of streets and rail the site is undeniably interwoven into our community. Reuse of this site will have a greater impact on St Marys than might be found in a more typical redevelopment area.

It appears that the mayor and local leaders, do indeed, support the rezoning to allow for expansion of the tax base, and if true here are two crucial items that must be considered:

1. Approve rezoning **BUT** limit the impact through a carefully crafted industrial ordinance. This ordinance should limit levels of rail, truck, and barge traffic (if any) and limit industry to clean, low impact development and not permit on site material processing that could add significant harm to the area. (Increase in rail / truck traffic has to be considered as to how it will impact the overall health of this community, as well as the future possibility of out of scale buildings and structures). This concept is an opportunity to allow economic development within the city limits while protecting the St Marys offerings that so many citizens (and future citizens) value. The creation of this ordinance will prove to be the 'make or break' moment for St Marys, that is why we urge the hiring of legal services specializing in industrial ordinances to help carry out this task. The ordinance must be crafted in such a manner that there be no loop holes for any developer to use to the disadvantage of the community. The ability of crafting such an ordinance is a monumental job and we feel the city leaders need the expertise of professional consultants (who do this type of work on a daily basis).
2. As an alternative to a rushed solution keep the current zoning and protect the Gillman Mill site for future waterfront based development that will enhance the existing downtown and entire community. This site is uniquely located to offer a myriad of future opportunities. If the site is not highly contaminated this might be a better long term approach for the city in conjunction with the existing investments in downtown development. Also, future development of the Gateway site would be harmed by an industrial use of the Mill site. The city has a major obligation to its citizens to pursue thoughtful development, and possibly not rush into the first project brought to the table, even though this 750 acre track has sat dormant for the last 12 years. (Trustee acknowledgement

at the Planning Commission hearing that several potential offers were turned away utilizing the existing zoning should be indication other opportunities do exist).

Above all we urge the Mayor's office and the City Council to adopt a 100% transparency policy with any and all development proposals presented to the city of St Marys. There seems to be a lack of public understanding as to what the remaining process will be in making this critical decision. We have heard assurances that the city leaders are working to balance the need to protect the character so loved by the residents while allowing for redevelopment of this site. The city needs to clarify the approval process for both the re-zoning request and the approval or permitting process for the end users of the site. (We have been assured by the developer that the city will have the ability to review end users but it unclear what authority or legal structure will exist to approve or deny usage requests of the Mill site).

There has been much rumor and innuendo regarding this latest project....much of this could be quickly dispelled with a greater effort by the city to inform and educate the residents of St Marys as to what is being considered. Obviously the current developer is seeking the site at a clearance price and does not have any long term plan that would protect St Marys and its citizens. We do not support the proposed unrestricted construction of docks on the North River, added traffic (both truck and rail) or the potential pollution, noise and disruption to this sensitive environment we call home.

Respectfully,

Les Warner
600 Carrack Drive
St Marys, Georgia 31558
912.576.1617

Monty Baus
600 Carrack Drive
St Marys, Georgia 31558
614.443.5444